

Report VP Chapters for the 2013 Winter Meeting of the Policy Council

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Introduction

During 2013, there have been two changes in reporting: the yearly report was moved from the Summer session to the Winter session and we added a web-page for reporting. The current version of the VP report covers information concerning the Chapters as far as available, a section about Field Development activities and an update of the discussion concerning the relationship between Chapters and SIGs.

Chapters during 2013

New Chapters

During the 2013 International Conference the possibility of converting an existing groups of dynamicists in South Africa into a Chapter was discussed, and I suggested that the Chapter-to-be might span the entire Africa region. This idea reverted later to applying for a South Africa Chapter (which is currently being voted in the PC) and a second, regional Chapter spanning diverse other African countries; this group has already proposed a constitution and I am awaiting the list of founding members in order to continue the process.

Established chapters

In recent years, several Chapters have included detailed information about the development of their membership (specifically the German, UK and Italy Chapters). This is very useful for us as SDS, since we are interested in Chapters achieving a reasonable number of stable members. It is interesting to note that the German Chapter also allows and tracks “institutional members”.

There is a high level of chapter activity in the form of meetings, workshops and local conferences (some with SDS aide, others on their own). This is a good sign that these Chapters are fulfilling their role to bring together the local SD community and to reach out in the local area.

Membership

The new “Chapter/SIG Representative menu on the web portal allows to know the respective numbers of total and SDS members of each Chapter. The following table indicates these numbers (state: February 10th, 2014), along with the number of universities and other educational institutions linked to the Chapter, the number of second generation faculty (indicating the development of SD education), the number of activities other than during the International Conference, the number of products (papers, books, models, videos, simulators) reported and if the Chapter is explicitly asking for support from the Field Development Fund:

Chapter	Total members	SDS members	Educational institutions involved	Second generation faculty	Activities	Products	Support demanded
Australasia	54	34					
Benelux	36	29	8		2		
Brazil	43	28	5	12	5	39	Yes
Canada	37	20					
China	38	22	2 (150 *)		8	302	Yes
Economics	167	117					
German	53	33					
India	34	9					
Italian	21	13	6		3	19	
Japan	38	14					
Korea	14	6					
Latin America	60	41					
Russian	7	7					
Student	139	69					
Swiss	32	21					
United Kingdom	104	66					

*Table 1: Chapter attribute overview. * The China Chapter covers an enormous area and authors of SD-related publication work in 150 different universities; see the Chapter's report for more details.*

As is easy to see in this table, the Chapter Reports are essential for us to keep ourselves informed about what is going on in each Chapter's area. The poverty of information concerning the Chapters which have not provided me with a Report yet suggests that gathering this information and putting it into the report format once a year is one main function of a Chapter Representative.

Web presence

Most Chapters maintain some kind of web presence. The following table shows the URL, if the respective Chapter's site is linked from the SDS main page (<http://chapters.systemdynamics.org/>), if it is up to date and if it uses the SDS logo:

Chapter	Website	On SDS	Updated	SDS Logo
Australasia	http://www.jomsocial2.systemdynamics.org.au/	No	2011	Yes
Benelux	http://simulation.tbm.tudelft.nl/BeneluxChapter/Intro.html http://chapters.systemdynamics.org/benelux/	No Yes	2012 OK	No -
Brazil	https://sites.google.com/site/systemdynamicsbrazilorg/	Yes	OK	No
Canada	-			
China	-			
Economics	http://chapters.systemdynamics.org/economics/	Yes	LinkedIn	No
German	http://www.systemdynamics.de/	Yes	OK	No
India	http://www.systemdynamics.co.in	Yes	July 2013	No
Italian	http://www.systemdynamics.it/	Yes	OK	Yes
Japan	http://j-s-d.jp/en/	Yes	OK	Yes
Korea	-			
Latin America	http://dinamica-sistemas.mty.itesm.mx/	Yes	OK	No
Russian	http://sysdynamics.ru/	Yes	?	No
Student	http://student.systemdynamics.org/wp/	Yes	OK	No
Swiss	http://www.systemdynamics-swisschapter.ch/	Yes	OK	No
United Kingdom	http://systemdynamics.org.uk	Yes	OK	No

Table 2: Web presence

Even though most Chapters' web pages are updated, I'd like to mention the UK, the Italian, the Brazilian, the German and the Latinamerican sites for their completeness. It seems also noteworthy that the UK site and especially the German site have a "look and feel" quite similar to the SDS "motherhood" website (maybe for using WordPress).

Reports

The Chapter Reports are – as far as available – attached to this report. I'd like to mention that several Chapters may have a hard time elaborating their annual report because of local conferences being prepared. In any case, Chapter Reports will be inserted into this report according to their arrival at the VP.

Chapter	Report available	Comment
Australasia	No	
Benelux	Yes	Recent local conference
Brazil	Yes	
Canada	No	
China	Yes	
Economics	No	
German	Yes	
India	No	
Italian	Yes	
Japan	Announced	Recent local conference
Korea	No	
Latin America	Yes	Informal
Russian	No	
Student	Yes	
Swiss	No	
United Kingdom	Announced	

Table 3: Chapter annual reports available

Field development

The SDS has extended its interpretation of the original “capacity building” initiative in the sense of including demand-oriented activities. The Italy Chapter has taken this opportunity to apply for financial aid and organized the “1st International SYDIC Workshop on “System Dynamics for Policy Assessment & Strategy Development” (<http://www.systemdynamics.it/workshop2014/>) with Pål Davidsen and Kim Warren as speakers. A report from this workshop is expected to be received from the Italian Chapter.

During the 2013 Summer Meeting of the PC, the difficulties of the Korea Chapter were discussed, and the fact of the Japan Chapter’s annual conference was used to give rise to the initiative of a bi-annual Asia-Pacific Conference to be held on February 22th - 24th (<http://www.systemdynamics.org/asia-pacific-14/>); the Field Development Fund aids invited keynote speakers and it is expected that this conference helps increasing SD presence in the area.

Latest developments in March: the very productive Asian-pacific conference in Tokyo brought together a fair number of local dynamicists with a relatively high percentage of invited experts,

leading to very productive presentation sessions. Many of the parallel presentations had attention-calling issues in their modeling and also in the presentations themselves. This led to colloquium-style sessions and the presenters greatly benefited from this. Personally speaking, this experience has led me to an insight concerning the relationship between *diffusion* and *capacity building*: advances in diffusion must be accompanied by sufficient capacity to assure high quality (just like model validity or credibility is not only a result, but mainly a *process*).

This is taken care of in some places. The established study programmes (probably mainly in the USA and Europe and to some extent in Latin America) are beyond doubt in this sense. However, even their students greatly benefit from the PhD colloquium at the International Conference. How is the situation in other regions like Asia-Pacific or Africa? Arguably the installed academic capacity of training and project oversight is lesser and therefore the likelihood that people study with a publicly available textbook and start modeling with one of the available software packages is higher in such regions. Hence a higher likelihood of having more quality issues in ongoing SD-work such as typically presented at regional conferences.

Regional capacity-building workshops are one means of improving local capacity. At the Cambridge conference, it was suggested the “modeling assistance workshop” might be offered online for SDS members – but this would require experts to remain available over huge periods of time. Helping international experts to be present in local smaller conferences seems to be a more viable alternative, even though (or because) it concentrates expert involvement to short spans of time.

I'd also suggest there are some other helpful things (which would be slower to implement helpful all the same):

- Translation of the established teaching materials and learning resources into local languages allows students to focus their mental resources on the SD (rather than on the language);
- Standard formulations (published) in application fields and domain-oriented learning materials (maybe produced by SIGs?) can speed up model development, quality and acceptance in application domains;
- Online courses (like MOOCs) in application domains can increase the outreach of experts without overstressing their time involvement.

Chapters and SIGs intersection

During the 2013 International Conference, the idea of improving communication between members across SIGs and Chapters took the form of a Customer Relationship Management system. From my point of view, this is an important step forward – always keeping in mind that there is a huge intersection of membership between SIGs and Chapters.

As a Society, we are now starting to have presence in Africa and striving to reinforce our presence in the Asia-Pacific area. As can be seen from the figures in Table 1, usually Chapters have a portion of their membership not being full SDS members. Even if the South African Chapter is not yet recognized and its membership data is not included in this report, it will follow the same pattern. I recommend that we, as the SDS, accept this fact and consider the Chapters as kind of antechamber

of full SDS membership. This gives Chapters a meaningful role to play for the Society in two ways:

- a) They represent “system dynamics” to the larger public, independently of specific application domains; this cannot be done by most SIGS (except the “model analysis SIG”);
- b) They can maintain communication amongst local area members of the different SIGs which happen to have members in the domain of the Chapter.

I would argue that the recent workshop and conference activity in virtually all the “active” Chapters suggest such an interpretation. Of course, this emphasizes the importance of the CRM system. For the 2012 and 2013 VP Reports, I was able to determine the membership intersections; this has not been done yet for the present report, but I do hope to include this information for the PC Winter Meeting.

VP Chapters in 2014

For 2014, we shall try to help the Chapters like Brazil or China (which have already signaled their interest in Field Development support) and follow closely the development in the Asia-Pacific and Africa areas.

The South Africa Chapter will have their first PC meeting on Friday, March 7th, and I’ve encouraged them to consider the use of the Field Development Fund.

I’ll inquire if the Chapters in India, Russia and Australasia have plans for an annual meeting or conference where some kind of expert participation (similar to the Tokyo conference) could be helpful.

There are plans to organize an ASEAN Chapter (ASEAN stands for “Association of Southeast Asian Nations”) from a central point in Singapore. This chapter might, in a way similar to the Latin American Chapter) cover a whole range of countries. The planned bi-annual regional conference might be the initial activity for this chapter.

The Korea Chapter has continued with an insufficient number of SDS members for more than a year, and the Tokyo conference has not served as an opportunity to change the tendency. I suggest that if they cannot recover the required level of at least 10 SDS members, we stop recognizing the Korean group as a Chapter and encourage them to participate in the ASEAN Chapter. This suggestion is, of course, open to debate.